

**COALITION AGREEMENT  
FOR STABILITY AND REFORM  
May 2010**

## INTRODUCTION

This document sets out how we expect our Coalition Government to operate in practice and the basis upon which the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Parties will jointly maintain in office Her Majesty's Government.

It reflects the agreements reached by our Parliamentary Parties. We expect it to endure for the duration of the present Parliament. The Government will put a motion before the House of Commons in the first days of the Government stating its intention that, subject to Her Majesty The Queen's consent, the next General Election will be held on 7 May 2015, to be followed by legislation for fixed term Parliaments of five years. The passage of the legislation will be subject to a whip in the Parliamentary Parties in both Houses.

There is no constitutional difference between a Coalition Government and a single party Government, but working practices need to adapt to reflect the fact that the UK has not had a Coalition in modern times.

The Coalition Parties will work together effectively to deliver our programme, on the basis of goodwill, mutual trust and agreed procedures which foster collective decision making and responsibility while respecting each party's identity.

Close consultation between the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, other Ministers and members of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties in both Houses will be the foundation of the Coalition's success. In the working of the Coalition, the principle of balance will underpin both the Coalition Parties' approaches to all aspects of the conduct of the Government's business, including the allocation of responsibilities, the Government's policy and legislative programme, the conduct of its business and the resolution of disputes.

### **1. Composition of the Government**

1.1 The initial allocation of Cabinet, Ministerial, Whip and Special Adviser appointments between the two Parties was agreed between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

1.2 Future allocation will continue to be based on the principle that the Parliamentary Party with fewer MPs will have a share of Cabinet, Ministerial and Whip appointments agreed between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, approximately in proportion to the size of the two Parliamentary parties. The Prime Minister, following consultation with the Deputy Prime Minister, will make nominations for the appointment of Ministers. The Prime Minister will nominate Conservative Party Ministers and the Deputy Prime Minister will nominate Liberal Democrat Ministers. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister will agree the nomination of the Law Officers.

1.3 Any changes to the allocation of portfolios between the Parliamentary Parties during the lifetime of the Coalition will be agreed between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

1.4 No Liberal Democrat Minister or Whip may be removed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister without full consultation with the Deputy Prime Minister.

1.5 The appointment of further Members of the Privy Council will be made following full consultation between the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

## **2. Collective Responsibility**

2.1 The principle of collective responsibility, save where it is explicitly set aside, continues to apply to all Government Ministers. This requires:

- (a) an appropriate degree of consultation and discussion among Ministers to provide the opportunity for them to express their views frankly as decisions are reached, and to ensure the support of all Ministers;
- (b) the opinions expressed and advice offered within Government to remain private;
- (c) decisions of the Cabinet to be binding on and supported by all Ministers;
- (d) full use being made of the Cabinet Committee system and application of the mechanisms for sharing information and resolving disputes set out in this document.

There are certain standard exceptions to the principle of consultation – the Chancellor's Budget judgements, quasi-judicial decisions and opinions of the Law Officers in particular. Budget judgements will require consultation with the Chief Secretary; when the Prime Minister is consulted the Deputy Prime Minister should also be consulted.

## **3. Functioning of the Government**

3.1 The establishment of Cabinet Committees, appointment of members and determination of their terms of reference by the Prime Minister has been and will continue to be agreed with the Deputy Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister will serve, or nominate another member of the administration to serve, on each Cabinet Committee and sub-committee. The existence and composition of Cabinet Committees and sub-committees will be published.

3.2 Consistent with the civil service code, all civil servants have a duty to support the Government as a whole. Special advisors may support an individual Minister in relation to their Government activities, but must at all times act in the interests of the Government as a whole. The private offices of individual Ministers, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, have a particular responsibility to their Minister.

3.3 The general principle will be that the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister should have a full and contemporaneous overview of the business of Government. Each will have the power to commission papers from the Cabinet Secretariat.

- 3.4 The Prime Minister, with the agreement of the Deputy Prime Minister, has established a Coalition Committee which will oversee the operation of the Coalition, supported by the Cabinet Secretariat. It will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, with equal numbers of members drawn from the two Coalition Parties.
- 3.5 Unresolved issues may be referred to the Coalition Committee from any other Cabinet Committee by either that Committee's chair (who will be a member of one Coalition Party) or its deputy chair (who will be a member of the other Coalition Party).

#### **4. Policy and Legislative Programme**

- 4.1 The principal policies of the Government are set out in the Coalition Programme for Government, of which the first part is the Agreement of 11 May, and the second part is 'The Coalition: our programme for government' of 20 May.

#### **5. Support for the Government in Parliament**

- 5.1 The two Parties will aim to ensure support for Government policy and legislation from their two Parliamentary Parties, except where the Coalition Programme for Government specifically provides otherwise. If on any future occasion any other exceptions are required they must be specifically agreed by the Coalition Committee and Cabinet. Ministers will be responsible for developing and maintaining a constructive dialogue with Members of both Parliamentary Parties.
- 5.2 As a general rule, the same whip will be applied by both parties to their members. This includes legislation agreed as part of the Coalition Agreement. Any exceptions will be explicitly agreed by the parties, including exceptions identified in the Agreement of 11 May. In all circumstances, all members of both parties will be expected to support the Government on all matters of confidence.
- 5.3 The Chief Whip of the Conservative Party will serve as Government Chief Whip and the Chief Whip of the Liberal Democrats will serve as Deputy Chief Whip. The Government Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip will consult and co-operate with each other to ensure the delivery of the Government's programme. Parallel arrangements will operate in respect of the Government Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip in the House of Lords.
- 5.4 Each of the Parliamentary Parties will be responsible for their own internal arrangements for ensuring effective Parliamentary support for the Government on all issues covered by this Agreement.
- 5.5 Neither Parliamentary Party will support proposals brought before Parliament other than by the Government unless considered and agreed by both parties. The two Parties may agree in the Coalition Committee or in the Parliamentary Business Committee occasions on which issues will be subject to a free vote, which will normally be the case for Private Members' Bills

## **6. Public Appointments**

On the issue of public appointments, the Prime Minister will consult with and have regard to the views of the Deputy Prime Minister.